

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

DECEMBER 31, 1823.

Mr. BARBOUR, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, to whom was referred the petition of Francis Henderson, on behalf of himself and family, the legal representatives of the late Lt. Col. John Laurens, of South Carolina, submitted the following

REPORT:

The facts set forth in the petition have been verified to the satisfaction of the committee, and are substantially as follows:

Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens, the ancestor whose services, civil and military, occupy a brilliant page in the history of the Revolution, entered the army of the United States, as aid to the Commander in Chief, in August, 1777. In this situation, he displayed a zeal, courage, and devotedness, not surpassed by any of his compatriots. He conciliated the esteem of his commander, and of his brother soldiers, and, for his distinguished services, frequently received the thanks of Congress. In 1780, he had acquired so much of the confidence of his country, as to induce Congress, unanimously, to appoint him a special Minister to France, on a most important service. Such was his success in this mission, as again to call forth the public thanks of that body. He returned to this country in September, '81—and, at his special request, Congress permitted him to join the army, then conducting the siege of Yorktown, in Virginia, where fresh laurels awaited him. He finally fell, on the 27th August, '82, in the lap of honor, fighting the battles of his country. His death was a national misfortune. He left an orphan daughter to the gratitude and to the protection of his country. A disinterestedness, even to carelessness, was a distinguished trait among his other qualities. Hence, for his long and important services, and the expenses attending the same, he seems neither to have kept an account, nor to have received any advances, except a small sum, to which, hereafter, a more particular reference will be made.

The father dead—his only child an infant and an orphan—and the grandfather, Henry Laurens, in captivity in England—there was no one to assert her claims.

Eventually, the grandfather returned from Europe, and, in '84, as the guardian of the child, presented her case to Congress, who came to the following resolution:

Resolved, That, in settling the accounts of the late Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens, as special Minister to the Court of Versailles,

he be allowed the same pay that was given at this period to the Ministers Plenipotentiary of the United States at Foreign Courts, from the time of his appointment to that embassy, until his return; and that the balance remaining due for his services as Minister, be paid to his representatives."

This resolution was not acted upon till '90. The accounts of the father, Colonel Laurens, in both characters, as Colonel and as Minister, were settled. But it is objected by his legal representative, the petitioner, (who intermarried with Frances Eleanor Laurens, the only child of Colonel John Laurens,) and, in the opinion of the committee, justly—that, in the settlement, no allowance was made for the expenses of Colonel Laurens while on his foreign mission, although, at that time, no advances being made our foreign ministers as an outfit, it was the usage of the Government to pay their expenses; and more especially, too, as Congress had expressly directed, that, in the adjustment of the account, his compensation should be the same as that of other ministers.

No account having been kept by Colonel Laurens of his expenses, the Committee have, of course, no certain data by which to ascertain the amount; in the absence of which, they have been compelled to resort to other circumstances, for the purpose of arriving at any satisfactory result. These are, 1st, That it is in proof Colonel Laurens paid his own expenses, as well as those of his suite. 2dly, He took up, at Nantes, on the credit of his father, £1000 sterling, equal to \$4,444 44. 3dly, He received from Dr. Franklin, the then resident minister in France, \$2,171 42; and, 4thly, on his return to the United States, he received, at Boston, where he landed, \$720 from the Superintendent of Finance, to enable him to join the army before York-Town, in Virginia. The committee, therefore, have assumed these sums, as furnishing the probable amount of his expenses; in which they have the more readily acquiesced, as it was about equal to the sum, in proportion to the time, allowed Silas Deane, a contemporary minister at that court, for his expenses.

The claim for \$101 85, results from the improper application of the scale of depreciation to the item for rations, in the military account of Colonel Laurens; who, unconnected with any state regiment, would be deprived of the compensation which his brother officers received, if it be not awarded by Congress; and, therefore, the committee deemed it reasonable to allow it. The claim for \$104 70 is obviously just, as it arises from an omission in extending and adding up the account. Uniting these two sums with his diplomatic expenses, produces an amount of \$7,542 41, which, with interest, at five per cent. from the fifth September, 1781, the day of his return from Europe, is equal to \$23,500. In allowing the charge for interest, from the above period, the committee have been guided by the resolution of Congress above referred to, and the report on which it was founded, which directs, that the child of Colonel Laurens should receive whatever was, in equity and justice, due the father; and for the further reason, that the grandfather, in fixing the portion of the daughter of

John Laurens, by his will, deducts therefrom the advances made the son, of which the sum taken up by him at Nantes is a part, with interest from the time of such advances.

The committee, in reporting a bill directing the money to be paid to Francis Henderson, jun. the only grandchild of Colonel Laurens, has, independently of its fitness, conformed to the consent of Francis Henderson, the elder, signified by a letter from him, and among the documents.

